

## OUTCOMES FROM JUNE 18 MENDING POVERTY CONFERENCE

On Wednesday, June 18, 2008, more than 150 people attended the ***First Annual MENDING Poverty Conference***, held at the headquarters of MEND (Meet Each Need with Dignity) in Pacoima. The daylong conference was focused on *Re-Framing Poverty*, this year's theme.

The conference focused attention on how all of us in Los Angeles can think about poverty in a different way, so we can act in different ways – to change policy, to improve services, to increase funding, and to increase public support. Each of our keynote speakers and each of our workshop panelists has a piece of that complex puzzle to talk about.

Frank Gilliam, Vice Chancellor at UCLA and Director of its Center for Communications, and Andy Goodman, principal of a goodman consulting and author of *Why Bad Ads Happen to Good Causes*, talked about how communications can influence social change regarding poverty. They emphasized the importance of race in how we think about poverty, and about the importance of blending powerful stories of individuals into a broader public conversation about systems change. To learn more about their work, go to their websites: [www.c3.ucla.edu](http://www.c3.ucla.edu) for Gilliam and [www.agoodmanonline.com](http://www.agoodmanonline.com) for Goodman.

Other “pieces of the puzzle” in our explorations of *Re-Framing Poverty* were provided by our keynote speakers Councilmember Richard Alarcon and nationally-known advocate Torie Osborn, and by speakers on panels about the media, funders, the role of young “Millennials” in re-shaping this important issue, board diversity for poverty nonprofits, health impacts of poverty and how clients can give back to the agencies that have helped them.

Our speakers told us that re-thinking poverty isn't just about ideas, it is about *action*. It is about changing the perception many people have that poverty is an insoluble problem, because if you think that way you're less likely to act. It is about changing the perception that poverty is somebody else's problem, because again thinking that way impedes action.

Especially at a time of great need, ever-tighter budgets and a sense of despair in some quarters of the nonprofit sector, such re-framing is imperative. And it needs to be energized by work at both the public policy level and in advocacy by both individuals and organizations.

The conference's principal co-sponsors were *MEND, Valley Nonprofit Resources and Councilmember Richard Alarcon*, with a group of additional sponsors – The California Wellness Foundation, Southern California Edison, Kaiser Permanente, Jewish Community Foundation, The California Endowment, United Way and the Office of Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky.

A 15-member Planning Committee, chaired by Diana Bonta of Kaiser Permanente and Frank Quevedo of Southern California Edison, guided the conference from beginning to end.

To get a fuller perspective on the day, see Susan Abram's insightful article from the June 19 *Daily News*, or Paula Doyle's article from the June 27 issue of *The Tidings*. Both are available for free download from VNR's website, [www.valleynonprofitresources.org](http://www.valleynonprofitresources.org) (go to Library section).

At the conference end, participants energetically supported a call for the ***Second Annual MENDING Poverty Conference*** to be held in June 2009 at MEND. Watch the VNR website for details about the specific date and other particulars.

It also was suggested that the 2009 conference theme might be **Taking Action**. We'd concentrate on how to reduce poverty and increase good services to poor people through a creative combination of changing public policy, getting poverty agency staff and clients involved in more assertive advocacy, and increasing the participation of clients on community boards and task forces.

We would like to hear from you if you have any other ideas about implementing what was learned at MENDING Poverty 2008, or about how to shape a successful conference day for MENDING Poverty 2009.

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